

KEY BISCAYNE

What's it like to live in Key Biscayne?

Like being on vacation, fun, but with a feeling of being secluded. Rich in local history, "The Key", as locals call it, is only the middle third of the island, the residential portion—sandwiched between two natural preserves—and getting there is half the fun. It gives you a feeling of escape from the big city life to a setting of nature and peace and quiet.

To get there you cross over a toll bridge, and drive along the Rickenbacker Causeway, honoring Eddie Rickenbacker, WWI's greatest flying ace (the 94th Aerosquadron), whose incredible life also included auto racing, inventing the four-wheel braking system, owning the Indianapolis Speedway, the presidency of Eastern Airlines, surviving a DC-3 crash (where, among other injuries, one eye came out but successfully re-inserted), and being lost at sea for 24 days in WWII. The Rickenbacker Causeway is one of the most enjoyable scenic drives in Miami. Once over the bridge you are on Virginia Key. On the left is the "Rusty Pelican" restaurant (where part of "Caddyshack" was filmed) and where you can dine with an incredible view of the city at sunset. On the right you'll pass Hobie beach where you can take windsurfing lessons, and dog beach where you can let your furry friends out to romp in the sea. Next on your right, the Miami Seaquarium (home of "Flipper"), and the University of Miami's Rosenstil School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences nicknamed "RSMAS" (razmuss), and you cross another bridge over "Bear Cut", which divides Virginia Key from Key Biscayne, and then you are on the Key.

As you drive through a natural area, the first third of the island, "Crandon Park", there are beaches to your left, and the site of the world-famous tennis tournament, the Sony Ericsson Open, is to your right.

When you leave Crandon Park and emerge into the middle third of the island, the town gives [vacation feeling](#) almost immediately. People are walking, running, riding bikes, kids play safely in the park (Key Biscayne is a big soccer town). To the left side of the road is a narrow strip of residential condos and beachfront hotels, including the exclusive Ritz-Carlton Key Biscayne. To the right, the majority of Key Biscayne's residential area of single family homes.

Straight ahead, Crandon Boulevard continues on to the end, where you enter the last third of the island, Bill Baggs State Park, also known as "Cape Florida" after the lighthouse, and nicknamed "El Farito" (the little lighthouse). You can tour the lighthouse, eat lunch at one of two restaurants, the Lighthouse Café or

the Boater's Grill, rent a multi-person bicycle with a shade, go swimming, fishing, or take a nature hike through the 400-acre park.

On your return trip, you will discover the Key Biscayne bridge offers one of the most impressive views of Miami, day or night. To the left of the bridge is Alice Wainwright Park and the beautiful waterfront home/museum "Vizcaya" (featured in movies like "The Money Pit") with its impressive concrete barge and romantic waterfront gazebo. The strip in between the two is the tail end of the "Brickell" neighborhood, and site of one of the last surviving Brickell Mansions, "Villa Serena", once the home of William Jennings Bryan, and the neighborhood where Madonna and Sylvester Stallone purchased homes.

To your right, the impressive Brickell Avenue area condos, with the famous "palm tree building" the "Atlantis" shown in the opening credits of "Miami Vice", Brickell Key, and downtown Miami and Miami Beach beyond. At night, the lights shimmer on the bay, making the name the Magic City come alive.

As you leave the Key, you are left with the feeling you were in a different world, with a slower pace. Even if you stayed just long enough to look around, you are left with that vacation feeling and the desire to go back.